

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:JFTEFFT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCPAC

S E C R E T STATE 026967

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT VIENTIANE 0833 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
BANGKOK 5 FEBRUARY.

QUOTE

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0833

EXDIS

DEPT PASS CINCPAC AND SECDEF WASHDC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, LA

SUBJECT: VIENTIANE SIDE SEEKS TO OUST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
LEUAM INSISIENMAY FROM LEADERSHIP

1. GENERAL VANG PAO CAME TO SEE ME THIS MORNING. THE SUBJECT OF
GREATEST CONCERN TO HIM WAS THE NECESSITY OF OUSTING VICE
PRIME MINISTER LEUAM INSISIENMAY FROM HIS POSITION AS CHIEF OF
THE VIENTIANE SIDE.

2. VANG PAO SAID HE HAD BEEN IN VIENTIANE FOR TWO DAYS IN AN
ATTEMPT TO GET WHAT HE REFERRED TO THE "IDIOTS" OF THE VIENTIANE
SIDE TO TAKE SOME BASIC DECISIONS. VANG PAO SAID THAT HE WAS
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FED UP WITH VIENTIANE SIDE LEADER LEUAM INSISIENMAY, WHO HAD

AMPLEY DEMONSTRATED HIS INCAPACITY. THIS VIEW WAS WIDELY SHARED AND HE WANTED TO CONSULT WITH ME REGARDING LEUAM'S REPLACEMENT. VANG PAO REPORTED THAT IN HIS VIEW AND THAT OF FINMIN NGON SANANIKONE, MINISTER OF INTERIOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN SHOULD TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP. THE MATTER HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH DEFMIN SISOUK BUT HE HAD BEEN UNCOMMITTAL. VANG PAO SAID THAT AS EVERYONE KNEW, PHENG ASPIRED TO SUCCEED PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH HIM THE ASSUMPTION OF LEADERSHIP OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP IF SOUVANNA PHOUMA DIES OR WITHDRAWS FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE.

3. I COMMENTED THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR PHENG HAD APPEARED TO BE SEEKING TO MAINTAIN A SLIGHTLY INDEPENDENT POSITION IN THE HOPE OF BOLSTERING HIS NEUTRAL CREDENTIALS, BUT THAT IF HE WERE WILLING TO ASSUME THE LEADERSHIP AND THE OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY, I BELIEVED THIS WOULD BE A GOOD MOVE.

4. VANG PAO SAID THAT HE WAS PROCEEDING AT ONCE TO LUANG PRABANG TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER WITH WHOM HE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED THE FOREGOING POSSIBILITY. AT THE TIME SOUVANNA HAD AGREED THAT PHENG WAS THE LOGICAL CHOICE AND HE BELIEVED THE PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION WAS UNCHANGED. THE PROBLEM WOULD LIE IN ACTUALLY ARRANGING THE UNSEATING OF LEUAM. NONE OF THE EXISTING VIENTIANE LEADERS WOULD WANT TO FACE LEUAM OVER THIS ISSUE. PRINCE BOUNOUM WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AND HIS CONCURRENCE SOUGHT. DEFMIN SISOUK WAS NOT ON GOOD TERMS WITH DOUNOUM AND IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND AN APPROPRIATE EMISSARY WHO WOULD UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION.

5. COMMENT. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THERE IS WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION IN THE ARMY OVER THE MANNER IN WHICH THE VIENTIANE SIDE LEADERSHIP HAS HANDLED ITSELF IN THE FACE OF INCREASED PATHET LAO MILITANCY. AS WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL, VANG PAO AND OTHERS ARE SEEKING TO BLOCK THE SLOW EROSION OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE'S POSITION WHICH THEY OBSERVE ON MANY ISSUES. WHITEHOUSE UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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